

Mayfield feels 'disrespected' by Buccaneers

Quarterback on final year under contract

BY ROB MAADDI
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

TAMPA, Fla. — Baker Mayfield feels “disrespected” by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and is focused on playing his best football.

The two-time Pro Bowl quarterback didn't get the contract extension he sought and plans to play out the final season of his three-year, \$100 million deal.

“I've been pretty up front and honest about my feelings about Tampa, it being home for our family, raising kids here,” Mayfield said Thursday. “We love it here. I wanted a deal done and set the deadline and told them it was going to be all ball after that, and I did mean that. I don't know if they thought I was gonna take some of the offers that they gave.

“I'm at the point in my career, understanding what I've brought to this franchise. One, I'm very thankful for the chance they gave me — do not get me wrong on that. But I also know, I really know what I've brought to this franchise, leadership-wise and even play-wise. It's been some of the best years of my career, and I think it's only going to trend upwards.”

Mayfield, who was the No. 1 overall pick in the 2018 NFL draft by Cleveland, revived his career in



Chris O'Meara/AP photo

Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Baker Mayfield takes a snap during an NFL football training camp practice on Thursday, July 30 in Tampa, Fla.

Tampa Bay after replacing Tom Brady in 2023. He made the Pro Bowl in each of his first two seasons while leading the Bucs to consecutive NFC South titles. He was an MVP candidate through the first half of last season when the team started 6-2 but struggled with injuries and tailed off.

“It's disappointing in that regard, to feel disrespected a little bit,” he said. “That's really the disappointing part to feel undervalued after thinking you've earned it. This is not a ‘poor me’ thing. There's a lot of other people who have it way worse off. But I can sit here and look at other quarterbacks and peers and evaluate myself based on that and put myself in certain

categories that I deserved to be compensated for that.

“I think I'm a franchise quarterback. I've been told I'm a franchise quarterback. It's been said publicly from ownership down here and to not have a deal done is very disappointing.”

Mayfield had set a deadline on getting a new contract by the start of training camp. He said he addressed his teammates to let them know he won't let the issue become a distraction. He also doesn't need it to motivate him.

“Money should never be the motivation in football,” he said. “It's how do I help this team win? It's never going to be the motivation for me. When it comes to having a chip on your shoulder and all that, for

me it just puts me in the mindset of betting on myself. That's something I'm pretty familiar with, and it's a good place to be. As a highly competitive guy, sometimes you have to put yourself backed into a corner and fight your way out. I have a lot of guys and a lot of staff around me that are with me, so I'm not alone in

it. We're fighting for the same goal, and that's to be playing in February.”

If Mayfield plays like he did in 2024 — 4,500 yards passing, 41 touchdown passes, 71.4% completion rate, 106.8 passer rating — the Buccaneers likely will have to pay him even more than he commands now. A contract that averages between \$50-55 million is considered to be Mayfield's current range.

“Baker hasn't missed a beat or changed one bit through anything that's going on,” offensive lineman Ben Bredeson said. “He's still our quarterback, he's still the same leader, friend, guy that we all love. When he says it's all about ball, he means it. He's probably one of the most consistent and locked in individuals I've ever had the chance to play with. It's an honor going to work with him every day and no matter what's happening outside of the building, he has not changed one bit and is ready to go at all times.”

Two-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle Vita Vea also is unhappy with his contract situation as he

enters the final year of his deal. He has missed the first two days of practice with a back injury.

“It's all about winning here now and what we're going to do and hopefully gets his back fixed and gets his deal done,” Mayfield said. “Vita deserves that. He's the anchor of our defense. I hope they take care of him.”



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